

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
US-backed opposition seeks to topple Venezuela government
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE VOL. 81/NO. 27 JULY 24, 2017

US rulers' crisis continues with liberals' drive to oust Trump

BY SETH GALINSKY
 AND JOHN STUDER

Much of the liberal media, Democratic Party politicians, some anti-President Donald Trump Republicans and the middle-class left refuse to accept that he is president and hope their relentless assault against members of his administration and family will lead to indictments, get him impeached or worse.

These forces are determined to take what are political differences with President Trump and turn them into criminal matters. That is the meaning of their endless "investigations." Over the last few days, their focus has become some emails and a meeting between Donald Trump Jr., and Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya. Jared Kushner, the president's advisor and son-in-law, and then Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort also attended some of the meeting. Kushner reportedly left 10 minutes after it began.

This is "disturbingly close" to treason, *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow insisted July 13. He goes on to say Trump is "not only a disgrace but also an assault on the culture and the country."

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Openings to join anti-imperialist fight 'Che brigade' to Cuba, Youth Festival in Sochi



Oswaldo Salas/Alamy stock photos

Cuban revolutionaries Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. Brigade to Cuba is named for Guevara, who fell in combat 50 years ago. Sochi youth festival is dedicated to Castro, who died last year.

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

Young people and workers have two important opportunities to join with people from around the world to advance the fight against imperialism and war and express solidarity with revolutionary Cuba — the "In the

Footsteps of Che International Brigade" to Cuba Oct. 1-15 and the 19th World Festival of Youth and Students in Sochi, Russia, Oct. 14-22.

The Cuba brigade, set for Oct. 1-15, is being organized by the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). It is named for Ernesto Che Guevara, a central leader of the Cuban Revolution, of its revolutionary government, and of efforts to aid

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Working class bears brunt of capitalist rulers' crisis

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

If you believe the capitalist rulers and their media, U.S. economic conditions are getting rosier. Official joblessness was 4.4 percent in June, nearly full employment, they say, and the "recovery" from the 2008 capitalist financial meltdown, now into its ninth year, is one of the longest on record. Federal Reserve Chairwoman Janet Yellen said June 27 that she now believes there won't be another financial crisis "in our lifetimes."

But working people see their jobs, living conditions, health, families and future prospects under unprecedented economic and social attack because of the growing crisis of capitalist production and trade. Rising joblessness, stagnant wages, spreading opioid epidemic, increased homelessness,

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Socialist Workers Party steps up campaigning across the country



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Minneapolis David Rosenfeld discusses need for working class to fight to take political power with Maria Flores on her doorstep.

BY JOHN STUDER

The Socialist Workers Party is organizing to knock on doors and talk to workers in towns and cities large and small across the country, discussing the capitalist rulers' deepening political and economic crisis and the fighting perspectives of the party. As the banner at the party's recent conference put it, "Act on the rulers' deepening political crisis" by taking the party and young socialists "deeper

into the working class."

As part of the discussion, SWP members and supporters will introduce workers to *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?*; *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People*; and *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, all three by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes, as well as *Is Socialist*

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Florida prisons reverse ban on three 'Militants', uphold it on two

BY SETH GALINSKY

Florida prison officials have informed the *Militant* that they have reversed their censorship of three issues of the paper, after the *Militant* and at least three prisoners filed appeals. But they upheld the ban on two other issues, in violation of the constitutional right to free speech and freedom of the press.

The *Militant* first learned May 23 that Santa Rosa Correctional Institution had impounded three issues that reported on and publicized May Day actions called to protest deportations and urge amnesty for immigrant workers in the U.S. Prison censors falsely claimed that the articles encouraged "activities which may lead to the use of physical violence," "riot, insurrection, disruption" or the "commission of criminal activity." All Florida prisons followed suit, per

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Hundreds protest cop killing of Charleena Lyles in Washington

BY EDWIN FRUIT

SEATTLE — Hundreds of people attended a June 27 town hall meeting here sponsored by the Seattle City Council to address the June 18 killing of Charleena Lyles by two Seattle cops.

Lyles was shot dead by Seattle police in her apartment after she had called to report a burglary. The police said she had two knives in her hands and had refused to put them down. Three of her four children were in the apartment at the time.

According to her family, Lyles wrestled with significant mental

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Socialist Workers Party gets hearing at NOW conference

BY SUSAN LAMONT

ORLANDO, Fla. — “The discussion we had most often with the women and men who attended the National Organization for Women conference here was about the meaning of President Donald Trump’s election,” said Rachele Fruit, one of six Socialist Workers Party members from Atlanta and Miami who participated in NOW’s Forward Feminism conference June 30-July 2.

“We explained the devastation working people face as a result of the long-term crisis of the capitalist system; that workers who voted for Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 and then voted for Trump, helping get him elected, didn’t suddenly become racists,” Fruit said. “They were looking for relief from unemployment, lack of health care, low wages, the scourge of opioid addiction and more. Above all, they were looking to ‘drain the swamp’ in Washington that does nothing but makes things worse.

“We pointed to the gains won by working people, including major advances for women in the Cuba Revolution,” she said. “They were transformed in the process of making and defending their revolution, taking political power and maintaining it to this day. This is an example worth emulating here.”

The conference drew 558 NOW members and guests, many from chapters throughout Florida but also from as far away as Hawaii. Dozens stopped by the Socialist Workers Party table during the conference to talk and buy revolutionary literature.

Some were drawn to a photo display showing the activities of SWP candidates around the country. It also

featured pictures from the *Militant* of young women from Iraqi Kurdistan, Iran and the Philippines buying communist literature at book fairs and other international political events the SWP has participated in over the past year.

Participants bought nine copies of *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?* and four copies of *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record*, both by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes, and seven copies of *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters. Participants also got a number of titles on the Cuban Revolution, women’s liberation, Marxist classics, the Jewish question and other subjects. All told, \$517 in literature and 11 *Militant* subscriptions were sold.

Jayna Fleming, a young African-American woman from San Antonio, Texas, spent some time at the table. SWP member Janice Lynn told her about the upcoming “In the footsteps of Che” brigade going to Cuba in October and the opportunity it presents to learn about the Cuban Revolution firsthand. “I got a lot out of our conversations,” Fleming said, picking up *Malcolm X Talks to Young People* and a subscription. “I want to learn more about the brigade.”

SWP members also joined political debate at several workshops.

“It’s been over 40 years since abortion became legal in the U.S. and look where we are today,” Cindy Jaquith, SWP candidate for Miami mayor, said at the workshop on “Reproductive Justice.”

“Governments at every level have chipped away at this basic right since the day it became legal,” Jaquith said. “NOW has advocated the same ap-

Autoworkers in Slovakia strike, win pay raise



Martin Mikula (CTK via AP Images)

After six days on the picket line workers at Volkswagen’s plant in Bratislava, Slovakia, went back to work June 26 winning a 14 percent pay raise over two years, a €500 (\$570) signing bonus and an extra day off. Sign above held by workers during strike tells the bosses: “Do not humiliate us.”

More than 10,000 of the plant’s 12,300 workers walked out after bosses rejected the union’s demand for a 16 percent raise. This is the first strike since the plant opened in 1992 and the first in a major Slovak factory since the country declared independence on Jan. 1, 1993. Workers build models like the Porsche Cayenne, the VW Touareg and Audi Q7.

Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004. Auto capitalists have since invested big in the country in chase of cheap labor and high profits. Today Slovakia is the largest car producer per capita in the world with 1 million vehicles churned out last year. Along with Kia and Peugeot Citroen, VW operates the largest plants.

The average wage at Volkswagen’s main plant in Germany is 2.5 times higher than at the plant in Bratislava, a gap workers are fighting to close.

Auto bosses at Kia in Slovakia, and Mercedes-Benz and VW in Hungary have also felt the pressure to give hefty pay raises to avoid strikes recently, often after workers staged “lightning” work stoppages.

— EMMA JOHNSON

proach being put forth today — elect ‘feminist’ or ‘pro-woman’ candidates, meaning Democrats. It doesn’t work. We need a fighting women’s movement, independent of the bosses’ two parties that can mobilize broad support in the streets for women’s right to abortion.

“I am also concerned about the liberal’s relentless witch hunt against President Trump, which threatens political rights critical to working people,” she said. “The target is the working class, those who voted for Trump, looking for a change from the capitalist crisis today. It’s a lie that these workers — Caucasian, Black, Latino, women and men — are ‘deplorables’ who are anti-woman, racist, and homophobic, as Hillary Clinton

said. Workers’ hatred for anti-working-class politics in Washington and the economic carnage they face means we can find allies to fight to defend our rights.”

One NOW member at the workshop asked Jaquith how she discusses abortion with workers who are opposed to it. “We go door to door in working-class communities nationwide and this is one of the questions we discuss,” Jaquith said. “We don’t challenge the moral or religious views that workers have, but explain that the government shouldn’t decide if a woman should give birth. Many, many workers agree that it should be up to the woman to decide, even if they are personally against abortion.”

That’s right, the questioner replied.

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Socialist Workers Party

Continued from front page

Revolution in the US Possible? by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters. And they will expand the circulation of the *Militant*, the party's paper.

David Rosenfeld, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Minneapolis, and party supporters campaigned in the community of Osseo, northwest of the city, July 1.

The SWP's party-building campaigning gets a boost from its election campaigns, since most workers today still look to the elections as a place to effect change. In addition to Minneapolis, the party is running for mayor in Seattle, Miami, Atlanta, New York City and Albany, New York, and the Communist League in Canada is running for mayor in Montreal.

Janet Franco told Rosenfeld that she was glad to meet him when he knocked on her door. "I worked drawing blood in a hospital in Texas, but I only made \$8 an hour," she said. "I need to make more money here because everything we need is so expensive."

"Workers carry the burden of the capitalist crisis," replied Rosenfeld. "The 2016 election results signal coming battles by working people against the attacks of the bosses and their government — that's why they fear working people. And it's fueling an accelerating political crisis in both capitalist political parties, the Democrats and Republicans."

She decided to get *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record* along with a subscription to the *Militant*.

"I think we need to organize together. We will never get anywhere if we are looking at each other as the problem, instead of at those who are making money from our work," Maria Flores said when Rosenfeld introduced himself and the SWP. She asked that party members come back again the next day when she'd have some money so she could get the books and paper they showed her.

"Come sit down and talk," Roy, a worker in a nearby metal fabrication plant, told Rosenfeld. After listening to him describe the roots of the political, social and economic crisis of capitalism today, Roy said, "I agree with a lot of what you're saying. I don't trust any of them, but I voted for Trump because he had some good ideas. But they're not letting him do anything."

"The anti-Trump witch hunt you see in the liberal media every day is being driven by the rulers' fear and contempt for workers who voted for Trump," Rosenfeld said. Roy invited the socialists to come back later and join him in eating the shish kebab he had cooking on the grill.

Rosenfeld got into a discussion with Ruben Cabrera, a young warehouse worker, about how workers and farmers made a revolution and took political power in Cuba. It is an example workers in the U.S. and elsewhere should emulate, Rosenfeld said. "I'd like to find out more about that," Cabrera said, as he subscribed to the paper and got a copy of *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record*. Six workers picked up subscrip-



Militant/Beverly Bernardo

Philippe Tessier, left, Communist League candidate for mayor of Montreal, being interviewed by Ghisi Serant July 10 on his early-morning "bon réveil" (good awakening) radio show.

tions that afternoon and four got books by party leaders.

Socialist workers have begun collecting the 750 signatures they need to go well over the filing requirement to put Rosenfeld on the Nov. 7 ballot as they continue to campaign throughout the city and beyond.

Party members in Albany are campaigning widely for SWP mayoral candidate Margaret Trowe. They've knocked on doors in Hoosick Falls, Watervliet and other towns where workers have been locked in strike battles and fights over the bosses' poisoning the environment.

The Socialist Workers Party had hoped to put Trowe on the ballot, but concluded it wouldn't be possible and

that the attempt was interfering with party campaigning across the country. They are organizing with party members and young socialists in New York City and the region to continue to campaign intensively for the party.

They are building a campaign meeting in Albany for Saturday, July 22, that will feature Trowe and SWP New York mayoral candidate Osborne Hart.

In an interview with the *Seattle Weekly*, Mary Martin, SWP candidate for mayor of Seattle, explained how silver miners, members of the United Steelworkers union, are fighting concession demands from Hecla bosses in Mullan, Idaho. "What they're asking for is their union protections of safety not to be violated by the company, because this is a dangerous industry," she said. "We are going to need to build a movement capable of taking political power out of the hands of the capitalist class, and our party — the Socialist Workers Party — is at the core of that."

Highlighted in bold type a break-out box in the article has Martin saying, "It's going to take a socialist revolution like what was carried out in Cuba to reorganize society and end the racism and dog-eat-dog nature of capitalism once and for all."

To get in touch with the SWP nearest you, check the directory on page 8.

Jacquie Henderson and Joe Kapsner in Minneapolis and Edwin Fruit in Seattle contributed to this article.

FBI agent indicted for lying in killing of LaVoy Finicum

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

An FBI agent involved in the cold-blooded killing of Robert "LaVoy" Finicum near the end of the ranchers' occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon on Jan. 26, 2016, was indicted on three counts of making false statements and two counts of obstruction of justice.

In a packed federal courtroom June 28, W. Joseph Astarita, a member of the elite FBI Hostage Rescue Team, pled not guilty to "knowingly and willfully" making false statements and "failing to disclose that he had fired two rounds" during the shooting.

Occupation leader Ammon Bundy, his brother Ryan, Finicum and others, were driving to speak at a community meeting in John Day, Oregon, about why they were protesting the imprisonment of cattle ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond and against federal land policies that have ruinous consequences for small ranchers and farmers. Based on a tip from undercover FBI informers, armed FBI and Oregon state cops set up a roadblock to intercept them, deploying snipers and surveillance planes.

The killing provoked condemnation by ranchers and others in the Pacific Northwest. "The truth will come out. LaVoy was just flat murdered," Tad Houpt, who helped organize the meeting Finicum and the Bundys were on their way to, told the *Militant* shortly after the killing.

Astarita is accused of lying about firing two shots at Finicum's truck, hitting the roof and missing on the second shot. Seconds later state troopers shot Finicum three times in the back, claiming he was reaching for a gun.

If convicted, Astarita faces up to 20 years in prison. After the court hear-

ing he was released pending an Aug. 29 trial.

"I'm encouraged. I'm thrilled that the grand jury came back with this finding," Jeannette Finicum, LaVoy's wife, told the press, adding that there are four other FBI agents who took part in the ambush who have not yet been charged. She said she wished the same standard would apply to the Bundys and other rancher protesters.

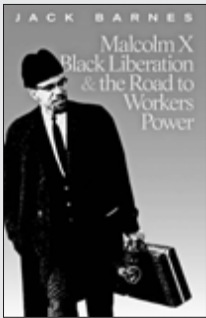
Ammon and Ryan Bundy and five others were jailed in Portland, Oregon until they were found not guilty on conspiracy and other charges involved in the Malheur protest Oct. 27. The Bund-

ys were immediately arrested again and are incarcerated in Nevada along with their father Cliven. They're awaiting trial on charges resulting from protests against federal agents' attempts to confiscate their father's cattle in a fight over access to grazing on federal land in 2014.

Protests have taken place outside the Nevada federal detention center where the Bundys are being held, against the abusive conditions they face in jail. Ryan Bundy has filed a civil lawsuit charging their constitutional rights are being violated by frequent strip searches and solitary confinement.

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‘Every attack on our revolution destined to fail,’ Cuban unionist says on US tour

BY ANDREA MORELL

BERKELEY, Calif. — Some 60 people heard Víctor Lemagne Sánchez, secretary-general of Cuba’s Hotel and Tourism union, speak here June 29 at Communications Workers of America Local 9119 union hall. The meeting was part of a national tour, with meetings with unionists and supporters of the Cuban Revolution in Los Angeles, San Diego, Chicago, New York and Baltimore. This was the first time in 17 years that a Cuban union leader succeeded in getting a visa to tour the U.S.

The goal of the tour, Lemagne explained, is to develop links between workers and unions in the U.S. and Cuba. The Cuban Workers Federation (CTC) is working to make it easier for unionists from the U.S. to organize trips and meetings with their counterparts in Cuba.

Lemagne is a member of the executive committee of the CTC and a delegate to Cuba’s National Assembly from the city of Trinidad, a popular tourist destination.

Lemagne began with a slide show that documents the damage done to the Cuban people by Washington’s economic embargo. “Every attack against our revolution by the Empire is destined to fail,” he said. “Our response is to continue with the economic development of our country, our revolutionary process.”

Workers in Cuba’s tourism industry see themselves as on the front lines of the struggle, Lemagne said. The industry has expanded rapidly, including a growing sector of self-employed nonstate workers. In 2012, he said, his union had only 345 members outside the state sector. Today they have 27,000.

The situation in Cuba is different than in the U.S. and other capitalist countries because workers and farmers have political power. They don’t have to fight for contracts boss by boss, Lemagne said, because workers’ rights and job conditions — in state-owned and private companies — are written into the country’s laws. His union makes sure that nonstate workers get the same rights and protections as state workers.

A record 3.52 million people visited Cuba last year. Even though the U.S. government maintains restrictions on visits to the island, Lemagne said, travel from the United States has soared. People coming from the U.S. now make up the second largest number next to Canada.

Many of the larger hotels are joint ventures, 51 percent owned by Cuba and 49 percent by foreign companies. Managers from abroad have to abide by Cuban labor law, he said, or they’re removed.

As tourism has mushroomed, with union membership rising alongside it, the union has fought to reduce workers’ workload to protect their bodies, he said. They work to limit the number of rooms cleaners in the hotels have to work per shift, to keep hours down, and for members to monitor safety on the job.

Unions are strong in other Cuban industries, he said. Ninety-five percent of Cuba’s workers belong to a union, and membership is “voluntary and conscious.”

Lemagne noted, with a smile, that

tourism workers in Cuba have guaranteed vacations, sick pay, social security and other benefits that hotel workers in the U.S. are fighting to get into their contracts.

He also said with pride that Cuban tourism workers donate whatever tips they get to cancer research and treatment, a total of \$23 million to date.

Alicia Jrapko of the International Committee for Peace, Justice, and Dignity, a sponsor of the meeting, urged from the chair that participants step up efforts to demand that Washington lift its punishing embargo, as well as return the territory of Guantánamo to Cuba. The U.S. rulers occupy Cuban territory there against the will of the Cuban people, maintaining a prison notorious for its physical and legal abuses.

Clarence Thomas, retired secretary-treasurer of International Long-



Cuban trade union leader Víctor Lemagne speaking at University of California Los Angeles Labor Center July 6.

shore and Warehouse Union Local 10, joined Lemagne on the platform. “International labor solidarity is sound union policy,” Thomas said, noting Local 10’s participation in the campaign to free the Cuban Five, Cuban revolutionaries framed up by Washington and imprisoned for years in U.S. jails until a growing international campaign finally won their freedom and return to Cuba.

Join ‘Che’ brigade to Cuba, Sochi youth festival

Continued from front page

workers and farmers worldwide to follow its example. He was killed 50 years ago helping to lead a guerrilla struggle against the military dictatorship of René Barrientos in Bolivia.

“We have 26 people signed up so far, from ages 19 to 70,” Steve Eckardt, brigade national co-coordinator, told the *Militant* July 9.

Eckardt explained that the brigade will meet with members of Che’s family and combatants he fought with during the Cuban Revolution and in Bolivia, and participate in a national mobilization to honor Che’s legacy on Oct. 8. They will also do “voluntary agriculture work alongside Cubans,” said Eckardt, as an expression of solidarity with the Cuban people and their revolution.

Brigade members will visit a number of Cuban provinces where Che led combat units during the 1956-59 revolutionary war. They will tour Santa Clara, Cuba’s third-largest city, where Che’s column defeated the army of Fulgencio Batista, sealing the fate of the U.S.-backed dictatorship.

They will have the opportunity to meet with members of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), the Cuban Workers Federation (CTC) and the Union of Young Communists (UJC).

Joe Kapsner, 31, a warehouse worker at a valve manufacturing plant in Minneapolis, will be making his first trip to Cuba on the brigade. “The working class in the U.S. is getting the crap kicked out of it,” Kapsner told the *Militant*. “Cuba is the one place where that is not happening. We need to bring Cuba and its socialist revolution into the discussion that is going on in the working class. To go to Cuba and bring that experience back will help me do that.”

The World Federation of Democratic Youth has been organizing festivals in different countries around the world since 1947, providing an opportunity for anti-imperialist young people to

come together, debate politics and plan common actions against war, exploitation and oppression.

World Festival

Some 20,000 delegates from over 120 countries are expected for this year’s festival. The motto for the gathering is “For peace, solidarity, and social justice, we struggle against imperialism. Honoring our past, we build the future.” It is dedicated to Fidel Castro, the central leader of the Cuban Revolution, who died Nov. 25.

All across Cuba revolutionary-minded young workers, soldiers and students have been meeting to discuss resolutions for the festival and elect delegates. Overall, Cuba is organizing to send 250 young revolutionaries to the gathering.

“It’s a high honor for me and a deserved recognition of the work of the youth in the Border Brigade,” Yaisis Isaac del Río, a first lieutenant in the military unit stationed outside the U.S. Guantánamo base and notorious prison, said after she was elected delegate from Cuba’s Eastern Army to the youth festival. “We are charged with keeping an eye on the perimeter of the illegal naval base that the U.S. government maintains on our territory since more than a century ago, against the will of the Cu-

ban people.”

The Union of Young Communists and other Cuban youth organizations organized events in Granma and Cienfuegos provinces beginning July 10 to discuss and debate proposals for the festival.

Yuliesky Pérez Navarro, a self-employed bicycle cab driver and member of the UJC, was elected as the direct delegate from Cienfuegos.

The conference will be conducted in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

The deadline for registration to attend the festival in Sochi is July 20. For more information and to get an application, contact the U.S. National Preparatory Committee at usanpc2017@gmail.com. No money is required to apply.

The deadline for the In the Footsteps of Che Cuba brigade is Sept. 10, but since space is limited, those interested in participating are urged to sign up as early as possible. The cost is \$650, which includes housing, food and transportation within Cuba. Travel costs to Cuba are separate.

To sign up or get more information, contact the Chicago Cuba Coalition at (312) 952-2618 or visit: chicagocuba-coalition.com/2017/06/30/in-the-footsteps-of-che-international-brigade-2/.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

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‘All Guantánamo Is Ours’ Film Showing. Speaker: Hugo Wils, Communist League, participated in Young Trade Unionists May Day Brigade to Cuba. Fri., July 28, 7 p.m. Donation: £2.50. Room 301, Hilton House, 26-28 Hilton St. M1 2EH. Tel.: (016) 1478-2496.

—CALENDAR—

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Celebrate 64 Years of the Cuban Revolution: Demand U.S. Out of Guantánamo, End Embargo. Fri., July 28, 6:30 p.m. Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, 5301 N Capitol St. NE. Sponsor: DC Metro Coalition in Solidarity with the Cuban Revolution. For info: dcmetrocoalitionforcuba@gmail.com

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Struggle for influence deepens as US-led forces gain in Iraq, Syria

BY JIM BRADLEY

As U.S.-led forces drive towards military victory over Islamic State in its former strongholds of Mosul, Iraq, and Raqqa, Syria, the political and military maneuvering for influence and territory between Washington and Moscow and Tehran is intensifying. Syria's bloody civil war, which has devastated the population, driving more than half from their homes, is now in its seventh year.

Washington's continuing military role in Syria and Iraq is rooted in efforts by Democratic and Republican administrations alike, under cover of defeating Islamic State, to reimpose stability in the region and defend their imperialist interests.

Preparations for a Sept. 25 binding independence referendum by the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq are continuing. Washington, Moscow, Tehran, Ankara and Baghdad all oppose it. There are substantial Kurdish populations adjacent to each other in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. Some 30 million Kurdish people are the largest nationality in the world without their own homeland.

At the same time close to a million people rallied against the Turkish government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan July 9 in a broad demonstration of opposition to the regime's repressive state of emergency.

At the end of June military clashes took place between U.S. forces and militia loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. They are in competition for control of territory around al-Tanf near the majority Shiite southern areas of Iraq. At issue are potential moves by Tehran to create a land link through this area to their ally Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Following the first face-to-face meeting between President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin July 7, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced that Washington, Moscow and the monarchy of King Abdullah in Jordan had agreed to foster a cease-fire — with agreement of Damascus — in a limited area of southwestern Syria. It began July 9. The area covers Syria's borders with the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

While Kurdish and Syrian Democratic Forces have advanced their drive to liberate Raqqa, the reactionary Islamic State has been shifting its troops and leadership into the Euphrates Valley, where it surrounds 200,000 people in the Syrian provincial capital of Deir al-Zour. Holding and advancing in this area is important for Assad's drive to effectively retake control of the country.

The Iranian government recently escalated its role in the Syrian war by launching missiles from Iranian territory against Islamic State targets in eastern Syria. Tehran has been supporting the Syrian regime with Iranian officers, Shiite militias from throughout the region and Hezbollah fighting under

Moscow's air cover.

Tehran aims to win control over territory through Iraq and Syria to Lebanon on the Mediterranean Sea. Washington opposes any increase in Iranian influence in the region.

The Syrian civil war began in 2011 after the Assad regime used its army to brutally crush a popular rebellion for democratic rights. Since then hundreds of thousands have died.

Mobilization in Istanbul

Hundreds of thousands of people gathered for a mass "Justice Rally" organized by the bourgeois opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) in Istanbul July 9. The action culminated a 25-day march from Ankara to Istanbul.

The protests mark growing opposition to a broad anti-democratic crackdown by the Erdogan government. His government used a failed coup attempt last July to establish a state of emergency that has led to firings and arrests of tens of thousands across the country. The attacks have hit all opposition to Erdogan, including the CHP, but have hit hardest at the Kurds and the Kurdish-led Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP).

The HDP, along with a wide range of unions, including the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions and Confederation of Public Sector Trade Unions, mobilized for the demonstration.

At a certain point the cops blocked tens of thousands more from entering the rally, saying the area was full.

Fight for Kurdish independence

One unintended consequence of Washington's wars in the region and the civil war that has splintered Syria has been the success of Kurdish forces carving out autonomous regions in both northern Iraq and Syria.

The U.S.-led coalition forged a tactical alliance with the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its People's Protection Units (YPG) military wing in Syria, as well as with the Kurdistan Regional Government's peshmerga in Iraq, because of the organizational

Miami car caravan protest: 'Yes to travel to Cuba!'



Carlos Rafael Diéguez

MIAMI — More than 50 cars joined a caravan July 8 protesting the announcement by Washington of steps to reverse some measures taken by then

President Barack Obama after Washington re-established diplomatic relations with Havana in 2015.

The caravan drove through Miami's Cuban neighborhoods for some 15 miles, carrying signs demanding an end to the embargo against Cuba, complete freedom of travel to the island and the immediate return of Guantánamo to Cuba. Inset, signs say, "Down with the blockade" and "Yes to travel to Cuba."

The caravan was organized after President Donald Trump visited Miami's Little Havana neighborhood June 16 to announce his new executive order. Flanked by veterans of the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, Trump saluted some of the most notorious henchmen of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, overthrown by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement in 1959.

Speaking to participants before the protest, Alianza Martiana leader Andrés Gómez noted that the caravan reflects what polls have shown — the majority of Cuban-Americans oppose the U.S. embargo.

— STEVE WARSHALL

strength and fighting prowess of the Kurdish forces. President Trump has maintained the alliance with the YPG over the strong objection of the Turkish government, which views the YPG as a terrorist organization linked to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey, which has been locked in a bloody struggle with Ankara for Kurdish national rights for over three decades.

YPG forces in Afrin, a Kurdish canton in western Syria, have been facing daily bombardment by Turkish-led forces. Ankara has sent troops, tanks and other heavy weapons into the Afrin area with the announced intention of clearing the YPG "terrorists" out of the territory, which is near the Syria-Turkey

border. Thousands of Kurds marched in the streets of Afrin July 5 to protest the bombings and the Turkish military buildup.

Erdogan has repeatedly stated that Ankara will not permit the establishment of a Kurdish state in northern Syria, home to 2 million Kurds. The YPG seeks to link up the larger autonomous Kurdish cantons in the east with their canton in Afrin in the west.

Ankara fears that the consolidation of a Kurdish ministate in Syria would embolden the struggle of the 15 million Kurds within Turkey for their national rights. For the same reason, Erdogan is staunchly opposed to the KRG's Sept. 25 independence referendum.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



July 31, 1992

Under the guise of "supporting humanitarian relief operations" for the Muslim, Serbian, and Croatian population under siege in Sarajevo, the world's major imperialist powers have begun moving warships into the Adriatic Sea off the coast of Yugoslavia.

[President George] Bush, President François Mitterrand of France, Prime Minister John Major of Britain, and the other heads of state of the major industrial powers hope to gain acceptance for greater military action due to the revulsion of people around the world at the slaughter taking place in Bosnia.

Muslim Slavs, who make up more than 40 percent of the country's population, continue to put up resistance along with many Croats, and Serbs to the militarily superior Serbian forces who have been relentlessly shelling Sarajevo and other towns.



July 24, 1967

NEWARK — "A City's Shame." That was the heading on a *Newark News* editorial. But black people aren't buying that line. There's a feeling of elation at having struck back at the criminal, hypocritical power structure that has ground us down for so long.

I was about six blocks away from where it all started. A black cab driver was arrested over some trivial business of following too close behind a squad car. The police were seen to brutally beat him and drag him to the Fourth Precinct a few blocks away.

It was the climax of a long series of insanely brutal acts by the cops. The "riot" was on.

A middle-aged woman said: "With all the Toms in soft political jobs and thousands of kids have nothing except to go to Vietnam and come back in boxes, what do you expect?"



July 25, 1942

In recent weeks German armies have added thousands of square miles to their previous conquests in the first year of the war, which amount to half a million square miles of Soviet territory.

By overrunning the Donets basin, the Nazis have deprived the Soviet Union of its coal, iron and steel base.

The bankruptcy of Stalinist leadership and of the Stalinist policy of depending on the imperialist "democracies" should now be clear even to the blind.

There is still time to issue the Bolshevik call of international solidarity and to summon the workers, above all the workers of Germany, to struggle side by side with the Red Army and the Soviet masses for the overthrow of all imperialism, whether fascist or "democratic," and for the establishment of the Socialist United States of Europe.

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US-backed opposition seeks to oust Venezuela government

Capitalist economic crisis wears on working people

BY SETH GALINSKY

The U.S.-backed opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable coalition (MUD) in Venezuela is escalating protests aimed at blocking a July 30 vote for delegates to a new constituent assembly and at bringing down the government of President Nicolás Maduro.

For the last three months, these opposition forces have stepped up protests across the country designed to provoke violent clashes with the police and National Guard. They seek to open divisions among the Venezuelan armed forces and government officials in the hopes of fomenting a coup.

Their actions are encouraged by the financial and travel sanctions imposed on some Venezuelan officials by the U.S. government.

Washington has sought to replace the Venezuelan government since 1998 when Hugo Chávez was elected president. While both Chávez and Maduro, who he chose to succeed him as president, left most industry and agriculture in the hands of the capitalist class in Venezuela, Washington saw what Venezuelans called the Bolivarian Revolution as an obstacle to imperialist domination of the region.

The U.S. rulers especially hated the Venezuelan government's close ties to revolutionary Cuba, the oil it provided Cuba and other Caribbean nations at preferential prices, and the use of oil profits to subsidize social welfare programs. Tens of thousands of Cuban internationalist doctors, nurses and teachers have volunteered to provide low cost medical care and literacy programs, often in the poorest and hardest to reach parts of the Venezuelan countryside.

Washington — and many of the leaders of the opposition Roundtable — backed a military coup in 2002 and a “strike” by oil bosses in 2003, both of which were defeated by massive popular outpourings.

Over the last few years, opposition groups have been able to take advantage of the deepening capitalist economic crisis — including their own sabotage of government measures — to bolster their position. Runaway inflation and constant shortages of food and other goods have made life

increasingly difficult for Venezuelan working people. Many pay less attention to politics today, consumed by the struggle to survive.

MUD candidates won a majority in the December 2015 legislative elections bringing the National Assembly under their control.

Opposition plans provocations

In April, after the Supreme Court backed off on its attempt to take away the National Assembly's legislative powers, the Roundtable launched a campaign of anti-government demonstrations that have resulted in more than 70 deaths, including both supporters and opponents of the government as well as bystanders.

On May 1 Maduro announced July 30 elections to a 545-member Constituent Assembly — with delegates elected both by region and by “sector,” including slots for students, retirees, peasants and fishermen, workers and bosses — which will have the power to revise the constitution and pass laws, bypassing the opposition-controlled legislature. MUD calls for a boycott, saying the election is unconstitutional and rigged.

The group has set its own unofficial referendum on July 16, in which voters will be asked for their opinion on whether they reject Maduro's call for a Constituent Assembly, and on the opposition's demand that government and armed forces officials defend the 1999 Constitution and back the decisions of the National Assembly.

The political polarization has continued to deepen as both sides engage in violent confrontations. Opposition demonstrators with their faces covered routinely throw Molotov cocktails and fire homemade mortars at police and National Guard sent to break up the protests.

The Roundtable is also taking advantage of a dispute between the Maduro government and Attorney General Luisa Ortega Díaz. Government officials began an investigation June 20 that could lead to her removal from office. Previously a supporter of the Maduro government, Ortega has spoken out against some of his measures over the last several months, including the call for the Constituent Assembly and against bru-



Xinhua/Gregorio Teran/Alamy stock photo

Monthly distribution of basic necessities in working-class neighborhood of Caracas, like one above March 26, 2016, are not enough to overcome shortages of products at government-set prices. Capitalist economic crisis, hoarding by bosses and government corruption have caused widespread discontent among workers, who still distrust pro-imperialist opposition forces.

tality by the police and National Guard.

A violent attack by pro-Maduro forces on Roundtable legislators inside the National Assembly in Caracas July 5 left several of them bleeding and battered. The attack handed Washington and the opposition a weapon to use against the government at home and abroad. Maduro said he “absolutely condemns” the assault.

Meanwhile, the Maduro government surprised many by unilaterally commuting the sentence of opposition leader Leopoldo López, transferring him from a military prison to house arrest. López had been imprisoned for over three years.

“Now is the time for sustained pressure on Maduro,” López's U.S. lawyer Jared Genser said after the release. “Relentless pressure is working.”

Working people bear brunt of crisis

It's workers and farmers in Venezuela who are paying the price of the capitalist crisis.

The gross national product has fallen an estimated 30 percent over the last four years. The worldwide drop in oil prices and a drop in Venezuelan oil production, which accounts for more than 70 percent of the country's hard currency, have made it harder to fund welfare programs.

The crisis is worsened by pressure from Washington, rampant inflation, hoarding of basic goods by capitalist companies, and anti-social problems bred by the crisis, including one of the highest violent crime rates in the world.

Nonetheless foreign speculators see Venezuelan bonds as a good investment because of the government's commitment to make every payment, despite the crisis.

In addition to shortages of food at government-set prices, there is a drastic shortage in medicines, from basic antibiotics to drugs for AIDS.

The government announced a 50

Continued on page 7

Florida prison ban on ‘Militant’

Continued from front page
their regulations.

The *Militant* fought and won reversal of previous impoundments of the paper by Florida prisons in 2013, 2015 and 2016.

Prison authorities “do their best to pass the buck to another source for the cause of potential trouble when most of the blame is truly generated from within the prisons,” one Florida prisoner wrote June 7 after his paper was banned. “It's almost never from what we see on TV or read in books and newspapers.”

The charge that the *Militant* presents any threat to the security of the prison or encourages disruption is just not true, he wrote. These are “fabricated and vague excuses just because they don't agree with the political position this newspaper has.”

Roger Bunger, a worker behind bars in Florida State Prison in Raiford who said we should use his name, wrote, “I and my paper are being targeted!” He also filed an appeal.

A few weeks after the *Militant's* lawyer David Goldstein, of the civil liberties firm Rabinowitz, Boudin, Standard, Krinsky & Lieberman, filed the paper's appeal, the Florida prisons impounded

issues 23 and 24, targeting articles covering the censorship fight.

Supporters of political rights, including the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, Pen America, and Stop Prison Abuse Now, sent statements supporting the *Militant's* appeal of the unconstitutional censorship.

On June 29 Florida prison systems' Literature and Review Committee member Charles Huber informed Goldstein that the ban on issue no. 16 had been reversed, and on July 7 he reported that issues 23 and 24 had been cleared as well. The committee gave no explanation for their decisions.

That leaves issues 15 and 18 still barred from the *Militant's* 48 readers in Florida prisons.

“The *Militant* will continue to fight for the right of prisoners to read the literature of their choosing, so they can be part of the world and make up their own minds about issues of importance for them and the working class,” *Militant* editor John Studer said. “We can expect to see and to fight against more arbitrary censorship as the crisis of capitalism — and the rulers' fear of the working class — deepens in the months and years ahead.”

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— Fidel Castro

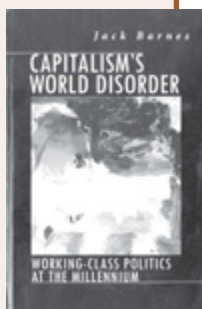
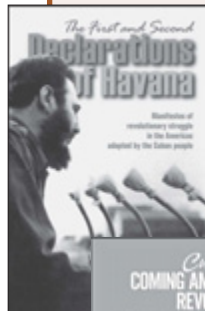
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US workers

Continued from front page

declining birth rates and devastating conditions are the “new normal” for workers and farmers.

The bosses and their government have no solution for the depression-like conditions this crisis forces upon working people. And, while it is impossible to predict when the next deep downturn will hit — it *will* come.

The closure of steel, auto, coal mining and other industries in many cities and towns across the U.S. have shattered the lives of millions of workers, leading to rising deaths from opioid overdoses. In Johnstown, Pennsylvania, where Bethlehem Steel once employed thousands, those who remained in town had little choice but to take jobs in retail at less pay. Now many of these workers, like others in places like Decatur, Illinois, and Saginaw, Michigan, are “getting hit a second time” the *New York Times* reported June 25, as bosses lay off these workers as malls and retail stores shut down, victims of competition from online shopping outlets.

“Rural America is the New ‘Inner City,’” headlined a May 26 *Wall Street Journal* article. It pointed out that in 2013 more people died in less populated U.S. counties than were born — the first time since records began being kept in the 1930s.

There’s also a growing gap between what employers pay workers in rural and urban areas. The average wage, the *Journal* noted, is now one-third lower in towns with 250,000 or fewer people.

Birth rates are falling as growing numbers of young people find it harder and harder to find steady jobs and company-funded health care. Growing numbers of workers put off starting families until a later age, if at all. In 2016 the “fertility rate” in the U.S. was the lowest it has been ever — 62 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44.

Nearly 10 percent of babies born today in the U.S. are premature. The U.S. has the worst rates of infant mortality, preterm birth and low birth-weight babies of all industrialized capitalist countries. In fact the U.S. has the highest rate of babies who die the same day they are born in the industrialized world.

At the same time, the gap in workers’ life expectancy has widened by 20 years, depending on where you live. It’s lowest on Native American reservations and counties along the lower half of the Mississippi and in coal country in eastern Kentucky and southwestern West Virginia.

Meanwhile, homelessness is on the rise, with many workers just a paycheck away from losing their apartments. Others face mental problems that the for-profit health insurance system no longer covers. In New York, for example, the government of liberal Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio admits the number of homeless people living on the streets has gone up by 40 percent compared to last year. De Blasio tries to pass this off, claiming it’s because of a housing shortage and because the survey was taken on a particularly warm day when people just felt like staying out-



Active working class is shrinking in U.S. Millions of workers are no longer in workforce. For men the rate has been dropping for 60 years. For males between 25 and 54 the percentage working is now lower than it was at the end of 1930s depression. Bars indicate recessions.

side! But the figures show that for the first time ever the number of homeless people on the streets and in city shelters is going up at the same time.

Shrinking workforce

While the official unemployment rate in June was 4.4 percent — basically “full employment,” the apologists for capitalism never tire of telling us — millions of workers are no longer counted as part of the workforce. The fact is, the active working class is shrinking in the U.S. The labor force participation rate — the share of the population actually working or looking for work — remains near a 40-year low.

Male participation in the labor force has been steadily dropping for 60 years. Between 1948 and 2015, the work rate for U.S. men 20 and older fell from 85.8 percent to 68.2 percent. For men of prime working age, the percentage working is “lower now than it was at the end of the Great Depression,” the *Weekly Standard* reported July 8.

The numbers of those who have had to accept just part-time hours with less pay and benefits continues to rise. In June it was 5.3 million.

According to the U.S. Labor Department report, average wages rose 2.5 percent over the past year — 4 cents in June — but not enough to

keep up with basic necessities, like food, rent and energy. “Fifty to 60 percent of lower-tier wage earners are earning less and less year over year,” Robert Frick, economist at the Navy Federal Credit Union, says. And real wages for production workers haven’t risen in over 40 years.

The crisis for working people is worldwide. Lower-wage temporary contracts for workers — leaving them to fend for themselves for health care and retirement — is the norm in the European Union. “The jobs crisis has gone on for so long that many would-be workers have given up and left the labor market for good,” the *Financial Times* reported July 5.

US-backed opposition seeks to oust Venezuela gov’t

Continued from page 6

percent increase in the minimum wage for government employees July 1, the third increase this year, but it isn’t nearly enough to keep up with inflation — estimated at 720 percent this year.

CubaDebate, a Cuban website, ran an article June 30 highlighting some of the challenges in Venezuela. It noted that the government, first under Chávez and continuing today, set up a low, parallel exchange rate for dollars for companies that import goods. But many companies instead sell the dollars on the black market, fueling inflation and worsening the scarcity of basic necessities. Corruption in the government is also a problem that alienates working people, CubaDebate said.

Government tries to combat scarcity

In March last year the government launched Local Food and Production Committees (CLAP) to combat scarcity and high prices.

“In every neighborhood, especially the poorer ones, local committees distribute a monthly bag of basic, subsidized products,” Ana Graciela Barrios, who works with a community group in the San Agustín del Sur neighborhood, told the *Militant* by phone from Caracas June 30. “It helps, but it only lasts a week. And not all the committees work as well.”

Other workers report that products designated for CLAP distribution all too often end up on the black market instead.

Shortages of medicine hit workers the hardest, Barrios said. Cuban-staffed medical missions, like Cuba’s other internationalist aid, continue and are popular among working people. But they have difficulty getting needed medicines and supplies.

“There’s tremendous discontent

among working people,” Barrios said. Nonetheless a significant section of the working class still sees the Maduro government as their government, or at least a lesser evil to the U.S.-backed opposition. Barrios said she supports the Constituent Assembly, “but it won’t solve Venezuela’s problems.”

Cuba protests U.S. interference

The revolutionary government of Cuba has condemned the violent protests and outside interference in Venezuela. Cuba’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs June 28 expressed “its strongest solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution and its leaders.”

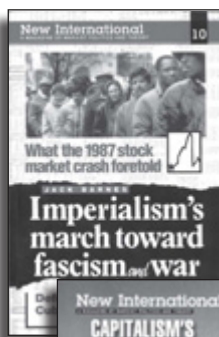
Granma, daily paper of the Communist Party of Cuba, featured an interview June 30 with Rogelio Enrique Suárez, a Cuban doctor who has been volunteering in Venezuela since 2014. Suárez notes that the Barrio Adentro joint Cuban-Venezuelan medical mission works in the areas “where the population needs us the most” and plans to continue doing so.

Venezuela is “in a war of attrition,” he said. The Cuban volunteers aren’t afraid, but “we have to be aware of the dangers.”

“We are committed, all of us,” he said, “to keep working and giving our best to maintain the advances” made by Barrio Adentro.

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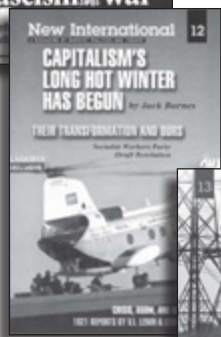


“Of all capitalism’s evils, the most fundamental one is how that system of exploitation reproduces its social relations as a condition of producing its profits. How its workings, its blind methods of functioning, keep grinding toiling humanity into the ground.”

— Jack Barnes

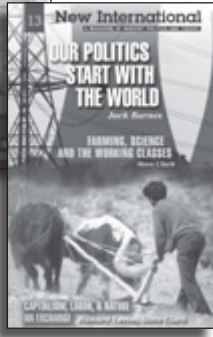
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Lac-Mégantic group calls for rail bypass, backs rail workers

The following article was submitted by Robert Bellefleur, spokesperson for the Citizens and Groups Coalition for Rail Safety in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec — formed in the wake of the July 6, 2013, oil train derailment and explosion that killed 47 people and destroyed the town center — to fight to force Ottawa to build a railway bypass around the town of 6,000. Locomotive engineer Tom Harding and train dispatcher Richard Labrie, both members of United Steelworkers Local 1976, face frame-up charges of 47 counts of criminal negligence.

It has been shown — by rail unionists and groups fighting for rail safety and by a series of investigative reports in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* — that responsibility for the catastrophe rests squarely on the bosses of the now-bankrupt Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway, with the complicity of the Canadian government. If convicted, the two rail workers, along with Jean Demaitre, a minor railway company official similarly charged, face up to life in prison.



BY ROBERT BELLEFLEUR

LAC-MÉGANTIC, Quebec — On July 6 members of the Citizens and Groups Coalition for Rail Safety in Lac-Mégantic held a press conference centered on the real and imminent danger of a second derailment in

downtown Lac-Mégantic, at the very place where the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic train derailed in 2013.

The coalition conveyed to journalists its deep concern about the dangerous curve of the new tracks through the town center that were rebuilt in the fall of 2013 following the tragedy. The tracks were built at a sharper 8-degree angle, creating a greater risk of derailment than the original 4-degree curve in place at the time of the disaster.

The fears of the coalition have been heightened. Since January 2014, the Central, Maine and Quebec railway — which replaced the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic — has been running around 10 trains a week through this curve, regularly transporting dangerous cargo in tanker cars filled with propane, sulfuric acid, sodium chlorate, as well as automobile fuel containing ethanol.

This is another clear proof of the chronic laxness of Central Maine and Quebec Railway's management and the federal government's Transport Canada, while Tom Harding, Richard Labrie and Jean Demaitre are still vociferously being prosecuted as solely responsible for the July 6, 2013, tragedy.

Their trial is scheduled to begin on Sept. 11. For a majority of the people of Lac-Mégantic the accused in this case are not the ones who should be in the dock.

‘Harding viewed as hero’

On the contrary, many Lac-Mégantic citizens view Tom Harding, the train's engineer, as a hero.

When the parked train rolled, derailed and the first explosions erupted that night, Harding quickly ran to the site of the disaster. He asked firemen for protective clothing in order to risk his life to detach and separate the last 10 unexploded oil tanker cars from the inferno that threatened to destroy the northwestern part of the town.

Harding showed exceptional courage that night. He does not deserve to be treated as a common criminal, nor does Richard Labrie and Jean Demaitre. They all carried out their responsibilities as best they could

DC fundraiser backs framed-up Quebec rail workers



Militant/Madhu DurgaSrihari

WASHINGTON — Some 70 rail workers, union activists and others attended a benefit for locomotive engineer Tom Harding and dispatcher Richard Labrie, two framed-up rail workers facing trial in September. They're charged with responsibility for the deaths of 47 people when an unmanned train carrying highly flammable shale oil rolled into Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, derailed and exploded in 2013. Participants heard remarks on the stakes of their fight and enjoyed an evening of "Music for Safe Rails and Sustainable Communities," featuring the U-Liners, at the Dew Drop Inn here July 9.

"The funds we raise are important, but second to the political defense we must wage. Harding and Labrie did not cause what happened. The charges against them should be dropped," said Fritz Edler, who organized the benefit. He is a retired Washington, D.C., Amtrak locomotive engineer and member of Rail Workers United. "The Canadian government and railroad owners are fighting to have history regard them as well in control of rail safety, justly disciplining the bad apples that cause all accidents. We can't accept that."

Jean Demaitre, manager of train operations for the now-bankrupt Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway, faces similar charges.

"What's at stake in their case is the fight over crew sizes," Bill Broadus, 52, an Amtrak engineer with 34 years of service, told the *Militant*. The Canadian government had given the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic dispensation to operate with only one crew member, cutting costs. "If one man crew was a standard, it would be devastating to rail safety," Broadus said.

The benefit was marked by three deaths in rail incidents nearly two weeks earlier. On June 27, CSX freight conductor Jake LaFave, 25, and Steven Deal, 20, a conductor trainee, were struck and killed by an Amtrak train while they stopped to inspect a malfunction in their train's wheels.

The next day, Reyhan Safoglu, 13, was killed when she was hit by a Virginia Railway Express commuter train while walking across the Bull Run Creek trestle in Manassas, Virginia. The tracks there run through a populated area, near a popular swimming and fishing hole, but they aren't fenced off and there are no walkways. Her cousin and brother managed to jump to safety.

— ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

under unacceptable work conditions imposed by an irresponsible company guilty of many breaches of the most elementary rules of railway safety.

For the citizens coalition, the public inquiry into the Lac-Mégantic catastrophe, which political authorities have so far refused to hold, has only been

postponed. We hope the criminal trial before a jury in Sherbrooke that begins in September will exonerate the workers and shine a spotlight on the responsibility of senior Montreal, Maine and Atlantic managers, politicians and high officials from Canada's previous government for this tragedy.

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Sign up for Cuba brigade, youth festival

Working people and youth have two unique opportunities to be part of the international fight against the destruction and havoc unleashed on us by the worldwide crisis of capitalism: the “In the Footsteps of Che International Brigade” to Cuba Oct. 1-15 and the World Festival of Youth and Students in Sochi, Russia, Oct. 14-22.

More and more working people and youth in the U.S. see through the hypocrisy and greed of the propertied rulers, who increasingly fear the explosion of class struggle to come as workers seek ways to fight against the ravages of capitalism.

The “smarts” who speak for the capitalists tell us that we’re at “near full employment,” when millions have been driven out of the workforce. They continue to maintain huge nuclear arsenals, while claiming they are for peace. And they try to convince us that “our” America is great, or can be great again. But there is no “we” — there are two classes, one of the wealthy property and bond owners, and another, the overwhelming majority, of workers and farmers.

Many working people are asking: Does it have to be this way? Is it possible for workers and farmers to change things? Can working people take power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers and their two crisis-ridden parties and reorganize society in the interest of the vast majority? Can we join with

others around the world to stand up to imperialist exploitation and build a world based on human solidarity?

The Cuban Revolution is living proof this is possible.

The “In the Footsteps of Che International Brigade” is a unique opportunity to see what the Cuban Revolution has accomplished, to exchange views with Cuban workers and youth and with fellow international brigadistas. To see that it’s not just talk when Cuban revolutionaries say they don’t share their leftovers, they share all that they have, a centerpiece of their internationalism.

At the World Festival of Youth and Students in Sochi you will also meet revolutionary-minded young workers and students looking for a way forward out of the deepening crisis. At the festival you can work shoulder to shoulder with members of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists, and Cuban and other youth who want to build a worldwide movement that can stand up to imperialism.

By participating in the Cuba brigade or the World Festival you can come back better prepared to fight the carnage capitalism sows and more convinced that we can make a socialist revolution right here in the U.S.

Sign up today!

Rulers’ crisis continues with drive to oust Trump

Continued from front page

“Take comfort in this eternal truth,” Blow concludes, “for all things, there comes an end.”

The media, the late-night comedy shows and morning news sing the same shrill song. “Mainstream media are speaking almost in unison; they are out of control with a consistency that shows they have forgotten what control feels like,” David Bromwich writes in “The Age of Detesting Trump” in the July 13 *London Review of Books*.

Target is the working class

The hysterical anti-Trump witch hunt continues to grow. It shows an absolute determination to do whatever it takes to drive him out of office.

The real target is the working class the rulers see behind Trump’s election.

In a previous week’s column, Blow called Trump, “a madman” who “himself is the offense,” as is anyone who supports him.

The rulers fear the working class because they see the anger and wide-ranging discussion by working people on the bruising effects of today’s capitalist economic crisis, leading to the class struggle to come.

Trump’s election registered a deep political crisis in both the Democrats and Republicans.

The hysteria is amplified by petty-bourgeois leftists, who write off the majority of the working class and can “understand” the logic in efforts to assassinate Republican elected officials. By focusing their fire on President Trump, they give support to the Democratic Party, and to capitalism.

Workers World Party and its newspaper called the June 14 assassination attempt by Bernie Sanders supporter James Hodgkinson, who targeted Republican congressmen at a baseball practice, “an anomaly” — that is, a freak that runs contrary to what the paper alleges is the real threat today: racist, sexist and anti-gay attacks by the government, built on growing prejudice in the working class.

“The targets of the shooting were reactionary Republicans,” *Workers World* says. “The person carrying out the shooting felt threatened by the Republicans’ attacks on the poor.”

But it is the liberal, left hysteria against Trump that spawned Hodgkinson’s attempt to reduce the number of Republican representatives in Congress. And it’s responsible for the threats of more attacks from Mark Pritchard, who was arrested after he broke into the Arizona office of Republican Sen. Jeff Flake. “You know how liberals are going to solve the Republican problem?” Pritchard told Flake’s staff. “They are going to get better aim. That last guy tried, but he needed better aim.”

Flake was on the ball field when Hodgkinson opened fire.

Workers World says “revolutionaries need to get better organized, to get more militant, to find means of mass resistance and self-defense that will make it impossible for the ruling class to continue its deadly assault on the masses.”

But backhanded support to the Democratic Party and rationalization of violence against alleged rightists only strengthen the hands of the ruling class. They provide a handle for government attacks on workers’ political rights.

They are deadly obstacles to workers being able to discuss and debate the road forward in the face of today’s capitalist economic crisis. Working people need to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist class and its two crisis-ridden parties, the Democrats and Republicans.

Since their water is not fluoridated, free fluoride treatments are given with careful instructions to families with children. All Cubans, from toddlers to seniors, receive at least two dental care appointments a year, with teeth cleanings, examinations, and timely treatment. Children receive braces for free.

Cuba’s health care (which includes dental) is a remarkable achievement and a testimony to what can be accomplished when the working class is in power. It’s a powerful example for the U.S. working class.

Lorraine Starsky
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

LETTERS

Teeth decay under capitalism

The *Militant* article “Deep class divide means some pay for brighter teeth, workers lose theirs” resonated deeply with me. One of my grandmothers died of blood poisoning from an abscessed tooth and the other lost all her teeth by her early 40s.

As a public health nurse I frequently encounter working-class families who struggle to find affordable dental care. I try to locate lower cost dental clinics for them, but the need always outstrips the available resources.

Recently I participated in a tour of the Cuban health care system. One day we visited a facility where the dental surgeons explained that they mostly repair teeth damaged by accidents. They noted that dental care in Cuba is considered a right and is free.

Protest Lyles’ killing

Continued from front page

health issues. The cops were well aware of her history of psychological problems and had been called to her residence more than 20 times before.

A few weeks before her death, police reported an incident in her apartment where Lyles refused to put down a pair of scissors, but said they had been able to de-escalate the situation.

“There have been too many unnecessary police killings across the United States over the past few years,” Charles Lyles Sr., Charleena’s grandfather, told the crowd. “Something has to be done.”

Some speakers called for better training of the police. But the *Seattle Times* reports that both cops had already gone though the police department’s Crisis Intervention Training prior to the shooting and one had previously taken a course in “de-escalation” and mental-health intervention.

“We live in a so-called progressive city, a sanctuary city, when in actuality, we live in the Deep North,” said Natasha Thornton. “We like to give ourselves a pat on the back, when in actuality, a pregnant Black woman was killed in front of her children.”

Some City Council members are calling for an independent inquiry outside of the police internal investigations.

Mary Martin, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Seattle, attended the forum holding a sign that read, “Prosecute and jail cops who killed Charleena Lyles.” Many gave Martin a thumbs up gesture.

Martin was not called upon to speak but told those who visited the SWP campaign table afterwards that “under capitalism the role of the police is to keep the working class in line, especially those who resist. Special punishment is meted out to those accused of not following police orders and those who are Black.”

Ebany Tura, a student at Franklin High School in Seattle, told communist campaigners, “I don’t think there is a way to make cops ‘better.’”

A June 20 rally and march near the housing complex where Lyles was killed also drew hundreds.

“I just want to grieve right now, but I can’t even do that because I’m so angry,” Tiffany Rogers, Charleena Lyle’s sister, told the marchers.

James Bible, the lawyer for the Lyles family, said that he had listened to audio of the shooting, and the police weren’t in imminent danger because they had time to debate whether to use a Taser or a gun.

“We have a serious problem on our hands, and no amount of training, or protocol is going to fix it,” said the Seattle King County NAACP in a June 20 statement. “It’s time to actually start holding officers accountable when they kill innocent victims.”

In Washington state alone, just the month before Lyles was killed, police shot and killed individuals in Vancouver, Auburn and Burien.

The killing of Lyles also highlights the deterioration in health care. Under the guise of “deinstitutionalization,” the number of beds in government institutions for the mentally ill were cut from 413,000 in 1970 to less than 40,000 today.

Little was done to provide alternate treatment while funding for mental health care has been cut by billions of dollars over the last decade.

Instead of getting the help they need, many with psychological issues end up in prison. According to *USA Today*, in 2014 there were more than 350,000 mentally ill people behind bars.

A 2015 report from the Treatment Advocacy Center said, “The risk of being killed while being approached or stopped by law enforcement in the community is 16 times higher for individuals with untreated serious mental illness” than for others who come into contact with the police.

John Naubert contributed to this article.

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